

STATUS OF THE CLAIMS

Claim 1. (currently amended) An elongate viewing assembly for use as part of an endoscope, comprising:

a) a flexible main portion bendable between a relaxed configuration and a strained configuration as the viewing assembly is guided through a lumen and carrying an imaging optical fiber and an illumination optical fiber; and

b) a substantially fixedly rigid distal portion connected to the main portion and having a pre-curved rest orientation and a distal end that is offset laterally from the main portion.

Claim 2. (original) The viewing assembly of claim 1, wherein the distal portion is substantially rigid.

Claim 3. (canceled)

Claim 4. (original) The viewing assembly of claim 1, wherein the offset of the distal end is in the range of about 1 millimeter to about 5 millimeters.

Claim 5. (original) The viewing assembly of claim 1, wherein the distal portion has a diameter in the range of about 2 millimeters to about 5 millimeters.

Claim 6. (original) The viewing assembly of claim 1, wherein the distal portion has a proximal end, the proximal end having an axis axially aligned with the main portion and the distal end having an axis diverging distally at an acute angle relative to the axis of the proximal end.

Claim 7. (original) The viewing assembly of claim 1, wherein the main portion and distal portion comprise substantially dissimilar materials.

Claim 8. (original) The viewing assembly of claim 1, wherein the main portion and distal portion comprise substantially similar materials.

Claim 9. (original) The viewing assembly of claim 1, wherein the main portion includes a sheath comprising polymeric material.

Claim 10. (original) The viewing assembly of claim 1, wherein the distal portion includes a tube comprising metal material.

Claim 11. (original) The viewing assembly of claim 1, wherein the main portion and distal portion are integrally constructed.

Claims 12-29. (canceled)

Claim 30. (currently amended) A [[An]] viewing assembly for use as part of an endoscope, comprising:

a) a flexible portion that is bendable between a relaxed configuration having a radius of curvature no less than about four inches and a strained configuration having a radius of curvature less than about two inches, and that rebounds elastically from the strained configuration at least about half way to the relaxed configuration; and

b) a distal portion pre-curved in a relaxed configuration and traversing a bend in the range of about 3 degrees to about 30 degrees.

Claim 31. (original) The viewing assembly of claim 30 wherein the distal portion is substantially rigid.

Claim 32. (canceled)

Claim 33. (original) The viewing assembly of claim 30, wherein the substantially rigid portion traverses a bend in the range of about 10 degrees to about 25 degrees.

Claim 34. (original) The viewing assembly of claim 30, wherein the substantially rigid portion traverses a bend in the range of about 15 degrees to about 30 degrees.

Claim 35. (original) The viewing assembly of claim 34, wherein the substantially rigid portion traverses a bend in the range of about 15 degrees to about 25 degrees.

Claim 36. (original) The viewing assembly of claim 34, wherein the substantially rigid portion traverses a bend of about 20 degrees.

Claim 37. (currently amended) An endoscope comprising:

a handle;

a light source;

an optical eyepiece; and

a viewing assembly including an elongate member operably connectable to the handle, light source and optical eyepiece, and having a flexible main portion bendable between a relaxed configuration and a strained configuration as the viewing assembly is guided through a lumen, and a substantially fixedly rigid distal portion connected to the main portion and having a distal end offset laterally from the main portion and a distal tip having a diameter greater than

that of the distal portion.

Claim 38. (original) The endoscope of claim 37, wherein the offset of the distal end is in the range of about 1 millimeter to about 5 millimeters.

Claim 39. (original) The endoscope of claim 37, wherein the distal portion has a diameter in the range of about 2 millimeters to about 5 millimeters.

Claims 40-42. (canceled)